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November 9, 2007

Mr. Kevin Martin  
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW:  
Room: 8-B201  
Washington, DC 20554

Re: NFL Network and Other Independent Programmers

Dear Chairman Martin:

I am writing to follow up on a number of concerns I have heard in my community about cable systems refusing to carry NFL Network. Many of these concerns also note that those cable systems require them to purchase other sports networks -- such as Versus and the Golf Channel -- that those constituents never watch.

I turn to you since I understand that the FCC has opened a rulemaking proceeding (MB Docket 07-42) to consider program carriage issues such as these -- particularly as they relate to independent and diverse channels.

I have seen a number of recent press stories noting that -- just like NFL Network and other independent sports channels -- non-sports independent channels face discrimination from big cable companies that own channels of their own, and that some independent channels like the Oxygen Network are choosing to sell themselves to large media holding companies rather than to try to continue as stand-alone businesses. It is not a good trend since this increasing concentration will reduce media diversity and consumer choice.

I also note that in connection with another high-profile sports channel carriage dispute -- the one between Comcast and the Mid-Atlantic Sports Network (MASN) in the Washington, DC area in 2005 -- the FCC's decision to appoint an arbitrator to settle the dispute caused the parties to reach a negotiated solution. I would urge the FCC to consider changing its rules to facilitate appointment of an arbitrator in disputes like the one involving the NFL Network, so they can be resolved more quickly (preferably through negotiation between the parties) and with consumers' interests foremost in mind.

Unless there is a timely resolution to the NFL Network dispute, fans in cities like Wausau, La Crosse, Eau Claire, Madison and Superior (over 40 percent of Wisconsinites) will not be able to watch the November 29<sup>th</sup> Packers-Cowboys game -- a game that could turn out to be one of the most important of the season for the Packers.

Thank you for reviewing these matters.

Sincerely,

*Brad L. Blumke*  
Alderman 9th District  
Watertown, WI

Cc: Commissioner Michael J. Copps  
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein  
Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate  
Commissioner Robert M. McDowell

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